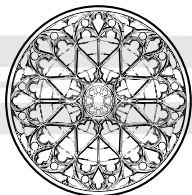


MANAGEMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND TOURISM: SOCIAL VALUE CREATION

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A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The quality of working life (QWL) research field dates back to the 1970s and has grown considerably since that time. At an individual level, positive outcomes of QWL include reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, improved job satisfaction and improved individual productivity; however, few studies have systematically analyzed all the employee outcomes associated to QWL.

Method: The systematic literature review methodology is used herein with the aim of identifying the employee outcomes associated with the QWL construct. More specifically, the article explores research studies that have examined QWL and its consequences for individuals in a given organizational setting. Since our focus was to gain insights into the empirical investigation about QWL, we exclude studies with a primary focus on model development or testing measurement instruments. Extensive research was conducted using the PROQUEST and EBSCO databases. On both databases, the following terms were included: quality of life at work, work-related quality of life, quality of working life, working-life quality. Only the work-related

consequences of QWL were considered. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in the English language between 1970 and 2017.

Findings: The results show how a higher level of quality of life at work can improve several relevant employee outcomes at work.

Value: This work corroborates previous studies confirming the linkage between QWL and employee outcomes and organizational commitment was found to be the most relevant employee outcome. Other core outcomes are job satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies.

KEYWORDS

Consequences, outcomes, quality of working life, systematic literature review

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1. INTRODUCTION

The origins of research related to the quality of working life (QWL) is not well defined, but the first evidence from such studies came in the early 1970s. The earliest research was essentially in the form of case studies of experiments in industrial organizations, often with the aim of describing the changes made in the QWL programs (Whitsett & Yorks, 1983). More recent research showed that organizational changes bringing improvements to the QWL could have a significant impact on employee behavioral responses, such as organizational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance, intention to quit, organizational turnover, personal alienation, etc. (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel, & Lee, 2001). QWL is not only important from the organizations' standpoint but also for employees. Sirgy et al. (2001) defend that "there is some evidence showing that a happy employee is a productive employee; a happy employee is a dedicated and loyal employee" (p. 242).

Despite extensive research on the antecedents and benefits of QWL, the relationships between QWL and employee work attitudes and behaviors have not been adequately examined (Shen, Benson, & Huang, 2014) and, to our knowledge, no systematic literature review (SLR) has been made of the consequences of QWL for employees. The existing reviews in the QWL area mainly focus on specific sectors (e.g., health sector, Phan & Vo, 2016) or employees with diseases (Jong, Boer, Tamminga, & Frings-Dresen, 2015). This research aims to fill this gap by investigating the employee outcomes related to QWL, on an individual level of analysis, using SLR as the method of study.

2. QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

The origins of QWL research related are not clearly defined. Several valuable contributions can be mentioned: (a) the studies of productivity and “satisfyingness” by Thorndike (1917), (b) the Hawthorne Studies at the Westinghouse Electric’s Chicago Plant between 1927 and 1932, by Elton Mayo (1933), or (c) the studies by Eric Trist and his colleagues at the Tavistock Institute in London (Agarwal, Garg, & Rastogi, 2013). However, in the 1920s-1930s the expression “Quality of work life” was still not in use.

To our knowledge, the expression “Quality of work life” came into more frequent use thanks to Irving Bluestone (Goode, 1989 as cited in Martel & Dupuis, 2006), Vice President of the General Motors department of the United Automobile Workers from 1970 to 1980 (Hevesi, 2007) and an advocate of Quality of Work-life programs. The following are the first academic references to the topic: (a) the First International Conference on QWL at Arden House, Toronto, in 1972 (Davis & Cherns, 1975), (b) the book entitled “Improving the Quality of Work Life” written by Davis and Trist (1972), and (c) the articles by Walton (1972, 1973, 1974) published in the Harvard Business Review and Sloan Management Review. It was also in 1973 that The International Council on the Quality of Working Life was formed. This council is responsible for the publication of a series of books on various aspects of QWL (Roan & Diamond, 2003).

The most preeminent contributions of the 1970s were the eight conceptual categories describing the core characteristics of QWL, proposed by Walton (1973, 1974): (i) adequate and fair compensation, (ii) safe and healthy working conditions, (iii) immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (iv) future opportunity for continued growth and security, (v) social integration in the work organization, (vi) constitutionalism in the work organization, (vii) work and the total life space, and (viii) the social relevance of work life. Recently, Grote and Guest (2017) not only ascertain that this list of criteria remains relevant but also add two further criteria (due to changes that have occurred since then): individual proactivity and flexible working.

The first research into QWL tended to be in the form of case studies of experiments in industrial organizations, job redesign, training, and teamwork (Roan & Diamond, 2003), most of which investigate QWL's impact on the productivity or labor turnover (Hales, 1987; Walton, 1973). Later, interest in QWL started to encompass research related with work and family balance, work-life balance, workplace stress, burnout, job satisfaction and emotions at work (Korunka, Hoonakker, & Carayon, 2008; Roan & Diamond, 2003), among other variables.

Despite broad acceptance in academia of the QWL criteria of Walton (1973, 1974), “there is no formal definition of quality of working life” (Sirgy et al., 2001, p. 241). Some researchers define QWL by analogy to the concept of quality of life. For instance, Roan and Diamond (2003) defend that the definition of quality of life proposed by Van Sell and Jacobs (1994) – “a global evaluative term that summarises a person’s reactions to the experiences in his or her life” (p.81) – can be applied to the work context. Recently, Fontinha, Van Laar, and Easton (2018) defined QWL “as the part of overall quality of life that is influenced by work” (p. 786). Other researchers prefer to relate the QWL concept to employee needs or employee satisfaction. Sirgy et al. (2001) define QWL as “employee satisfaction with a variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace” (p. 242);

Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy, and Rashmi (2015) as “an extent to which an employee is satisfied with personal and working needs through participating in the workplace while achieving the goals of the organization” (p. 281), while Mosadeghrad, Ferlie, and Rosenberg (2011) state that QWL refers “to an employee’s satisfaction with working life” (p. 171).

Ahmad (2013) synthesizes the concept saying: the QWL “is generally associated with a series of objective organizational conditions and practices that enables employees of an organization to perceive that they are virtually safe, satisfied and have better chances of growth and development as individual human beings” (p. 73).

Although a number of studies recognize that QWL is a multidimensional construct (e.g., Edwards, Van Laar, Easton, & Kinman, 2009; Fontinha et al., 2018; Mosadeghrad et al., 2011; Sirgy et al., 2001), the dimensions considered vary. While Sirgy et al. (2001) understand QWL to be a second-order construct embracing seven dimensions (health and safety needs, economic and family needs, esteem needs, actualization needs, knowledge needs and aesthetics needs), for Mosadeghrad et al. (2011) the QWL construct has nine dimensions (participation and involvement, job promotion, disturbance handling, communication, motivation for work, job security, wages and salaries, job proud and job stress). According to studies by Easton and Van Laar (2012), the construct has six factors (recently proposing a seventh one; Fontinha et al., 2018): home-work interface, working conditions, job-career satisfaction, control at work, the absence of stress at work, commitment and general well-being. The QWL literature seems like a patchwork with various different theoretical backgrounds and empirical approaches. More work is needed to define the conceptual framework of QWL. This lack of clarity in the area is even greater when the analysis is deepened to the employee consequences of QWL. A systematic literature review (SLR) will be performed in the following sections with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of the consequences of QWL for employees.

3. METHOD

This SLR followed the steps proposed by Rew (2011) (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Steps of the systematic literature review

1. Identify specific research question(s) to be answered.
2. State purpose of the review. What are its aims?
3. Identify inclusion and exclusion criteria.
4. Select search terms to use.
5. Identify appropriate databases to search.
6. Conduct the electronic search.
7. Review outcome of search and match with inclusion/exclusion criteria.
8. Data extraction. Systematically retrieve data from each paper included.
9. Determine quality of studies reviewed.
10. Summarize findings in a table.

-
11. Interpret meaning of the evidence retrieved.
 12. Acknowledge limitations and biases inherent in the process.
 13. Publish and apply findings in practice.
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Source: Rew (2011, p. 65)

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The starting point of this SLR is the research question underlying this research: “What are the consequences of QWL for the employee at the individual level of analysis?”. Hence, the main objective of the study is to investigate the employee outcomes of QWL in the organizational context, at the individual level of analysis.

3.2. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

This SLR encompasses publications that meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) the title has one of the specific terms identified in the “3.3. Search terms” section; (b) they were published between January 1970 and December 2017; (c) articles published in peer-review journals with the full document available (thesis, conference articles, books, working papers, abstracts, posters, and reviews were excluded from the analysis); and (d) documents written in English.

The focus of the analysis was specified further by introducing the following exclusion criteria to the selection process: (a) all documents automatically selected by the databases but, on detailed analysis, were found not to be related with QWL (e.g., documents that have the words quality of life and work in different sections of the title); (b) documents not relating QWL with the employees’ outcomes; (c) documents not written in English, even though the title and abstract were in English; (d) reference is not made to individual level outcomes (this is the case of organizational performance); (e) documents with the same research published in different journals (despite with slightly different titles); (f) the employees’ outcomes are dimensions of the QWL construct; (g) poorly written documents, which hinders a clear understanding of the results; and (h) descriptive studies or studies with insufficient statistical evidence.

3.3. SEARCH TERMS

Given the diversity of terms used in QWL literature, the database searches considered the following four expressions when found in the title of publications: quality of life at work, work-related quality of life, quality of working life, and working-life quality.

3.4. DATABASES AND ELECTRONIC SEARCH

The choice of a database is of the utmost importance in a systematic literature review. Criteria must first be established before selecting a source like Web of Science, Science Direct, JSTOR, SCOPUS, Proquest, EBSCO, ISI, Pubmed.

Authors use databases rather than search engines when they need information about a specific field, focusing on a particular source type (such as peer-reviewed articles), related to a specific concept and that is only available by subscription. In light of the research field, topic, suitability and quality, EBSCO and Proquest were chosen as multi-disciplinary and prominent database providers; they presented full text-periodicals published in peer-reviewed journals used for the pursuit of research and subject refinement. The electronic search was performed in April 2018.

3.5. REVIEW THE OUTCOME OF SEARCH AND MATCH WITH INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The database article selection returned 542 documents, 310 documents in Proquest and 232 in EBSCO. After removing the duplicated documents (n=167), a list of 375 documents was obtained. There was an overlap of 31% of the publications in the Proquest and EBSCO databases.

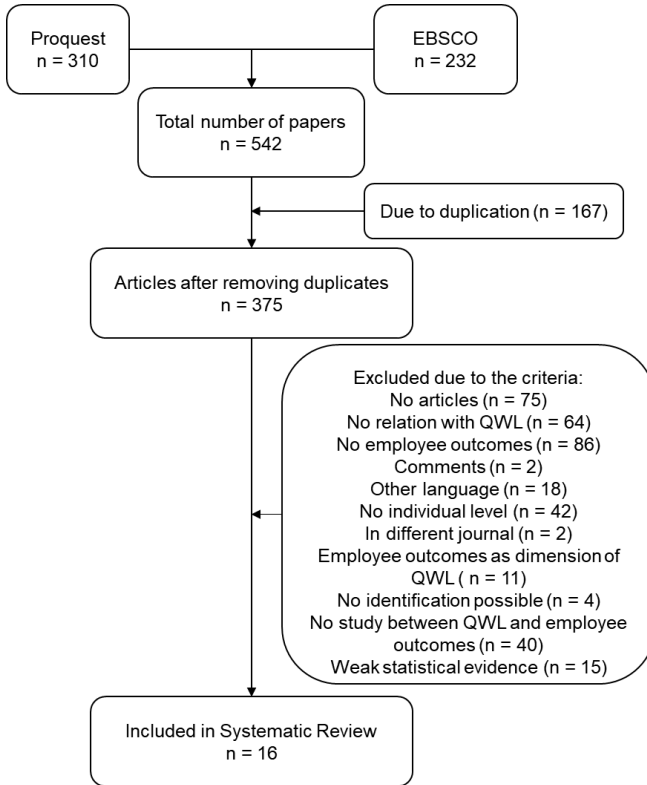
The selection of the studies was screened by three evaluators working independently. In the first data analysis, the title and abstracts of the documents were analyzed. When necessary, the full document was also examined with the aim in this phase of accessing the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The exclusion criteria were dynamically adjusted to increase the quality of the documents retained for analysis (e.g., studies with insufficient statistical evidence were excluded in this phase).

In this process, 327 documents were excluded due to the inclusion/exclusion criteria: 75 were not articles, 64 had no relation with QWL, 86 did not present employees' outcomes, 2 were theoretical comments, 18 were presented in languages not considered for analysis, such as Mandarin, Russian, etc., 42 presented results at the organizational rather than individual level, 2 articles appeared repeatedly in different journals; in 10 articles the employee outcomes are a dimension of QWL; 40 articles did not study the relation between QWL and employee outcomes; the statistical evidence was poor in 15 articles, and the outcomes could not be identified in 4 articles as it was poorly written.

3.6. DATA EXTRACTION AND QUALITY OF STUDIES REVIEWED

A total of 16 studies were considered for the present SLR (Figure 1). Two of the researchers made a thorough analysis of the full text of these studies. The 10th to 13th steps of the SLR (Table 1) are presented in the results and conclusion sections.

Figure 1 - The systematic review process



4. RESULTS

A table was constructed to provide a pictorial comparison of the study characteristics and results (Table 2).

The study by Walton (1973), the first in this SLR, suggested that changes in aspects affecting the working life quality lead to long-term alterations in productivity. However, this outcome should be considered with caution due to the theoretical nature of the study.

Using a quantitative approach, Benders and van de Looij (1994) present a correlation between QWL (assessed as (dis)satisfaction relative to several job characteristics) and willingness to quit. Turnover intention is a similar employee outcome that was addressed in three QWL studies (Korunka et al., 2008; Mosadeghrad et al., 2011; Wagenaar, Kompier, et al., 2012). In the Mosadeghrad et al. (2011) study, the facets of QWL predicting turnover intention are low motivation, organizational policies, job stress, poor communication and lack of job security. According to the Korunka et al. (2008) study, two other facets of QWL (emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction) predict turnover intention. In the study by Wagenaar, Kompier, et al. (2012),

autonomy is negatively related to turnover intention and task demands are positively related. These results are supported by Chinomona and Dhurup (2014) who found that QWL predicts tenure intention.

Tuuli and Karisalmi (1999) and Cetrano et al. (2017) studied another outcome: burnout. In Tuuli and Karisalmi (1999) "burnout was positively related to the amount of different conflicts in the work place, job demands, and monotony on the job" (p. 444). Cetrano et al. (2017) demonstrated that ergonomic problems and the impact of work on life predict higher levels of burnout, while trust, autonomy, participation, perceived quality of meetings, and organizational commitment have a negative impact on burnout.

Job satisfaction or work satisfaction are also employee outcomes associated with QWL (Chinomona & Dhurup, 2014; Danford, Richardson, Stewart, Tailby, & Upchurch, 2008; Wagenaar, Kompier, et al., 2012; Wagenaar, Taris, et al., 2012). The study by Danford et al. (2008) found the following QWL dimensions predict job satisfaction: fair treatment, consultation, job security, joint decision-making in teams, increased job responsibilities, increased workload (negative impact) and increased working hours (negative impact). The study by Wagenaar, Taris, et al. (2012) shows that adverse physical working conditions, physical load, work pressure, lack of autonomy, repetitive tasks, less work complexity and irregular working times are associated with less work satisfaction. The study by Wagenaar, Kompier, et al. (2012) related two dimensions of QWL (autonomy and task demands) with work satisfaction, turnover intentions and employability: greater autonomy leads to higher work satisfaction and employability and fewer turnover intentions, while more tasks to do and extra work are associated with less work satisfaction and higher turnover intentions and employability. The greater the perceived QWL, the higher the levels of employee job satisfaction will be (Chinomona & Dhurup, 2014).

Organizational commitment (also known as job commitment or employee commitment) is another frequently studied employee outcome associated with QWL (Amjad & Rafique, 2013; Chinomona & Dhurup, 2014; Danford et al., 2008; Ojedokun, Idemudia, & Desouza, 2015; Yasin & Khalid, 2015). The study by Danford et al. (2008) shows that partnership environment, fair treatment, problem-solving groups, and increased workload also predict employee commitment. Amjad and Rafique (2013) demonstrate that compassion satisfaction (subscale of QWL) is a significant predictor of job commitment. Job satisfaction, job commitment, and SME employee tenure intention are also employee attitudes predicted by QWL in the study by Chinomona and Dhurup (2014). In the Yasin and Khalid (2015) study, working conditions predict organizational commitment (but only in the affective dimension). QWL can have a direct effect on organizational commitment, but it may also be indirect through the mediation of job involvement (Ojedokun et al., 2015).

Stress is another employee outcome. Danford et al. (2008) found that several dimensions of QWL tend to increase stress: a partnership environment, consultation, joint decision-making in teams, work hours, greater job responsibilities, heavier workload, and increased working hours. However, fair treatment and formal training have a positive impact and reduce stress (Danford et al., 2008).

Table 2 - General characteristics of the sixteen studies included in the SLR

#	Study and Year	Type	Outcomes	Statistical Techniques
1	Walton (1973)	Theoretical	Productivity	-
2	Benders and van de Looij (1994)	Quantitative	Willingness to quit	Correlations
3	Tuuli and Karisalmi (1999)	Quantitative	Burnout	Linear Regression Model
4	Danford et al. (2008)	Quantitative	Job satisfaction Employee commitment Stress	OLS Regression
5	Korunka et al. (2008)	Quantitative	Turnover intention	Structural Equations
6	Mosadeghrad et al. (2011)	Quantitative	Turnover intention	Correlations
7	Wagenaar, Taris, et al. (2012)	Quantitative	Work satisfaction	Correlations and variance analysis
8	Wagenaar, Kompier, et al. (2012)	Quantitative	Work satisfaction Turnover intention Employability	Correlations and Variance analysis
9	Amjad and Rafique (2013)	Quantitative	Organizational Commitment	Linear Regression Model
10	Chinomona and Dhurup (2014)	Quantitative	Job satisfaction Job commitment Tenure intention	Structural Equations
11	Shen et al. (2014)	Quantitative	In-role performance Extra-role performance	Multilevel analysis
12	Ojedokun et al. (2015)	Quantitative	Job involvement Organizational commitment	Linear Regression Model
13	Yasin and Khalid (2015)	Quantitative	Organizational commitment	Structural Equations
14	Kachoei, Tehran, Dehghani, Didehban, and Raisi (2016)	Quantitative	Interpersonal forgiveness	Correlations
15	Far (2016)	Quantitative	Satisfaction of the customers	Correlations
16	Cetrano et al. (2017)	Quantitative	Compassion fatigue Burnout Compassion satisfaction	Linear Regression Model

In addition to employee attitudes at work, employee performance can also be influenced by QWL. Shen et al. (2014) defend that “QWL serves as an important intrinsic and extrinsic motivator, as it is concerned with the employees’ needs for growth, learning and development, and economic and family needs, thus linking HPWSs [high-performance work systems] and teachers’ work performance” (p. 826).

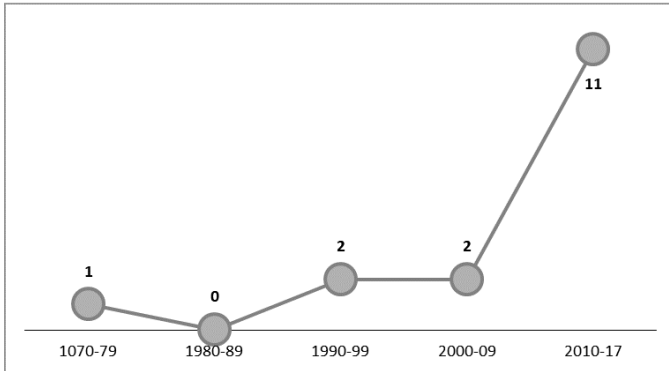
Through a multi-level study, Shen et al. (2014) demonstrated that QWL has a direct impact on the employees' in-role and extra-role behavior.

Although various other employee outcomes are associated with QWL, evidence is scarce. That is the case of job involvement (Ojedokun et al., 2015), interpersonal forgiveness (Kachoie et al., 2016), customer satisfaction (Far, 2016), compassion fatigue (Cetrano et al., 2017), and compassion satisfaction (Cetrano et al., 2017).

Following the above identification and brief description of QWL studies, some additional remarks can be made.

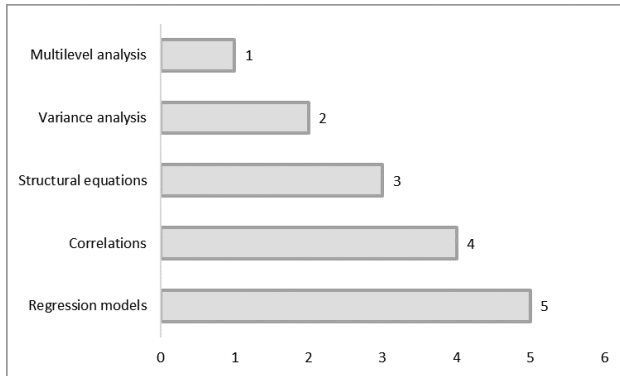
As can be seen in Figure 2, there is an upward trend over time in the distribution of the studies considered. The first document was published in 1973 (Walton, 1973). In the first phase (1970-2009), a small number of articles were published that addressed the employee outcomes of QWL but the number rose rapidly in the last seven years (69% of the studies of this SLR were published in this period).

Figure 2 - Evolution of the studies by date



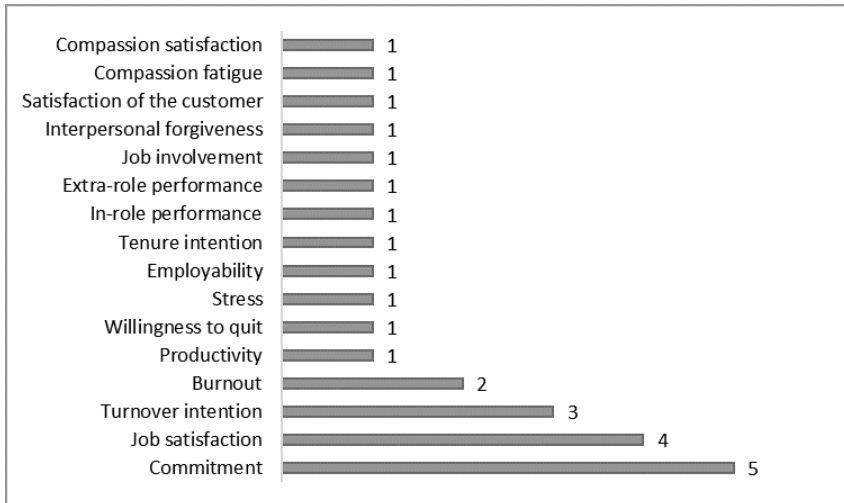
Most of the studies were empirical and quantitative (93.75%) and only one study was theoretical. The statistical methods used in the selected articles vary considerably: five articles (33%) used regression models (linear multiple regressions and OLS regressions), four (27%) used correlations methods, three (20%) opted for structural equations models, two (13%) used variance analysis and correlations, and only one study (7%) opted for the multilevel method (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Methods of statistical analysis



Organizational commitment was the most cited employee outcome of QWL, followed by job satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. Even though there are several other outcomes, they have only one accreditation and are therefore not representative, as can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Employee outcomes for QWL



5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to explore employee outcomes associated with the QWL construct. The study was carried out using the SLR method and by analyzing a collection of articles obtained from Proquest and EBSCO. Results revealed some linkages between the QWL construct and employee outcomes.

QWL has been developing as a scientific discipline since the 1970s. Its inception followed industries' rapid growth in interest and need to promote better conditions for employees. The changes in industrial organizations during the 20th century and workers' growing demands have made QWL an important issue for organizations. Nowadays QWL is recognized as a multidimensional field (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2012) and a concept related to an array of topics.

This work corroborates previous studies confirming the linkage between QWL and employee outcomes (Rai, 2015), and organizational commitment was found to be the most relevant employee outcome. Other core outcomes are job satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies (Rai, 2015; Sirgy et al., 2001).

It should also be stressed that some of the studies included reported productivity, willingness to quit, stress, employability, tenure intention, in-role and extra-role performance, job involvement, interpersonal forgiveness, customer satisfaction, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue as other employee outcomes.

Shen et al. (2014) noted that the relationships between QWL and employee work attitudes and behaviors had not been thoroughly examined; hence, this SLR synthesizes the main employee outcomes associated to the QWL construct. This research demonstrates that it is essential for companies to continue investing in improving conditions related with health and safety, employment security, job satisfaction, occupational stress, work environment, work-life balance, and human relations (Ahmad, 2013), among other variables. These influence employees' QWL and, in turn, their attitudes and behaviors at work; ultimately, this has an impact on important organizational variables, such as performance (e.g., Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Becker & Kernan, 2003; Carmeli & Freund, 2004).

The limitations of this research can be seen as an invitation to improve and refine further studies in the field. More specifically, the two databases used as the basis of this research may not have all the available impact papers in the field and future research might therefore use other databases for the purpose. Secondly, the QWL construct is not adequately delimited, and the scale measures are very diverse. For instance, some constructs are considered as an output of QWL in one study but are included in the QWL construct itself in others; for example, whereas job satisfaction is considered a consequence of QWL in some studies (see Table 2), it is part of the QWL construct in others. This occurs with the Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) Scale (Easton & Van Laar, 2012; Edwards et al., 2009; Van Laar, Edwards, & Easton, 2007) where job and career satisfaction is one of the dimensions of the construct. Finally, a considerable number of outcomes were supported by weak data analysis (e.g. correlations) and the inclusion of more databases and impact factor papers would therefore increase the robustness of the data analysis.

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